

THE SPIRITUAL ISSUES OF THE WAR

This bulletin is published for readers at home and abroad by the Religions Division of the Ministry of Information, London, to elucidate the spiritual issues at stake in the war, and to provide information concerning the British Churches in wartime, as well as their contribution to post-war reconstruction.

Number 221

JANUARY 27th, 1944

PREPARING FOR THE OPPORTUNITIES OF PEACE

Bishop of Gloucester's Appeal for Christian Unity

The Bishop of Gloucester, Dr. A. C. Headlam, Chairman of the Church of England Council on Foreign Relations, at a special service in St. Dunstan's-in-the-West on January 23rd, spoke on the need for Christian unity in the face of contemporary challenges to Christian principles. Clergy of many nations and Churches were present, and took part in the opening procession.

The Bishop took as his text Ephesians iv. 15, "Speaking the truth in love."

"During the four years of this war," he said, "and indeed often before, I have been associated with so many of you in conference, in a simple hospitality, in discussion. We have met—men of many different Churches—in friendship and good fellowship. We hope and pray that this period of distress is drawing to a close, and I have wished to have the privilege of meeting you in an act of worship such as this, of speaking to you of our mutual hopes and ideals, and thus of preparing for the opportunities of peace and friendship and unity which we hope that the future may bring.

"There are two great facts that I would start with.

"The first is that ultimately the cause of these disastrous wars and convulsions in which we find ourselves involved is spiritual. A large part of the civilised world, a large part of the intellectual world of Europe, has been untrue to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. In older days our Christianity was often very imperfect, and we did not carry out in

life the principles we professed to hold, but the public law and customs and life of Europe were based on the Christian Revelation. Now quite definitely that is repudiated. The Christian Faith is denied. Clearly, blatantly, arrogantly, a new materialistic creed is being imposed on the world. And as the Christian Faith is denied, so the Christian morality is rejected. The Christian law is a law of love. It teaches kindness, consideration for others, justice, human rights. It has continuously tempered the harshness and cruelty of the world. Now the doctrine of force is openly asserted. We are asked to believe that the good man is the strong man, and his strength gives him the right to what he can acquire, without regard to the rights of others.

"The second great point on which the Christian morality is rejected is the claim for race superiority. Christianity clearly proclaims the unity and equality of mankind. 'In Christ Jesus there is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither Greek nor barbarian. We are all one in Christ.' That means that every race and nation should be treated with justice and fairness. It does not mean that all are equally clever or advanced in civilisation. If we rule a less advanced people we must rule them justly, and many of the troubles of the world have come because these claims of morality have not been fully recognised. But now we are told that one race is superior, and because it is superior it has the right to make all other peoples its slaves. No race has a right to live if its interests

Distributed by

BRITISH INFORMATION SERVICES

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conflict with those of the superior race. So we read of wholesale massacres of defenceless people—worse than anything recorded in history—and the attempt to destroy the civilisation of other peoples.

"It is this negation of the Christian morality, which, however imperfectly carried out, has been the basis of the public law of civilised nations, that is the main cause of the evils under which we suffer.

"The second point that I would emphasise is the weakness of Christianity owing to its divisions. Our Lord Jesus Christ founded the Christian Church that it might be a great society binding together the nations of the world in one great brotherhood, one great fellowship. Owing to the faults and failures of mankind that Church is divided. There is an English Church, and a Scotch Church, and a German Church, and a Roman Church, and an Orthodox Church and many more. The Church ought to be the great International. It is too often the support of national particularism and prejudice. It has often found itself involved in contests. Wars have been waged to defend the opinions of this or that Church, and impose them on other nations. The State has controlled the Church and attempted to make it the implement of its policy. If the Church were one and free, it might do a great deal to prevent the quarrels of the nations.

"It is disloyalty to the Christian Faith, and the weakness and disunion of the Christian Church, that are the ultimate causes of our evils. We all of us long for a time of peace and friendship between the nations. I do not believe that you can secure peace among the nations unless you can make the influence of Christianity paramount. The cause of our troubles is spiritual failure, and we can only cure that by new spiritual life. If you want to do that it can only be through building up the Church of Christ. If you want to unite the nations in friendship and peace, you must do it through the amity and friendship of the Churches.

"I look in another direction. I see the two great peoples the Chinese and the Japanese, arrayed one on each side of this great war. And while I see on one side that the greatest man in China is a Christian, and our ally, on the other side I see the same assertions of pagan principles of life and conduct, violent aggressiveness, the claim to be a superior race, a ruthless disregard of human life, a determination to exterminate Christianity. They have destroyed deliberately 800 churches and mission stations in China.

There are many people who despise and look with contempt on Christian Missions. Their adherents are generally obscure and unknown. There are not many wise, not many noble among them, as St. Paul says. They have been working in obscurity in China and can see the beginnings of a great transformation in that remarkable race.

"Our duty then is to build up the Christian Church. It means the spread of the Gospel throughout the world—a task in which many nations have taken part—and the promotion of the unity and friendship of the Churches. That is what we have to speak about now.

The Limits of State Action

"First let me say that we are not concerned with politics or State action except this. By the Atlantic Charter we are guaranteed religious freedom in the post-war period, and that is essential, and religious freedom must mean also educational freedom, for a parent must have the right of his child being brought up in his own religion. We need freedom, for real unity can only come through free consent. We do not need or demand State action. There is always a tendency in Governments when they make use of religion for their own purpose to try and bring about unity by State methods. I suppose that nothing has been more fatal to Christian unity. Once you attempt to compel a man to change his religion or put him into a position of inferiority you stir up the spirit of resistance, or else you deprive his religion of reality and life. The only atmosphere in which you can bring up real unity is freedom.

"Next let us realise this. There is throughout the Christian world a real unity. We may differ in our method of expression. We have been separated from one another so long. We have developed such different customs and ways of thought that it may often be difficult to discover this unity, but if we contrast Christianity with non-Christianity, the unity of thought becomes clear. The great body of Christians base their faith on the belief in Jesus Christ, our Saviour and Redeemer, on the Incarnation and Atonement, and as accepting His leadership would rule their lives according to His teaching. That is the faith of the Christian Churches. It unites them against those who are not Christian. It gives, we may hope, a basis on which the well-being and happiness of mankind may be founded. Let us try and

realise this fundamental basis of unity, however much we may be perplexed by our divisions and differences."

The Bishop concluded by stating the principles and methods which he considered most important in the furtherance of unity.

MR. R. A. BUTLER ON THE RELIGIOUS PROVISIONS OF THE EDUCATION BILL

In presenting his Education Bill for its second reading, Mr. R. A. Butler, President of the Board of Education, spoke on the dual system (*i.e.*, the system whereby a proportion of schools maintained by the State are "controlled" by religious denominations, in view of the fact that they were originally founded by them) and on religious instruction in the schools. Overseas readers may be glad to see this part of Mr. Butler's speech, which calls for a spirit of co-operation between the State and the Churches in the educational field. We quote from *The Times* report (January 20th, 1944):

The right hon. gentleman said that he found written in the charter of one of the old grammar schools:—"God of his abundant grace hath sent copious plenty of children, but not plenty of money to maintain them." It had been asked why the dual system could not be done away with, and all schools placed under a uniform control, with their expenses found from public funds.

How then had the Government approached the matter? In endeavouring to "discharge our duties in this weighty affair"—to use the words of the preface to the authorised Prayer-book—they had been fortified by the fact that they were a National Government, and had made an all-party approach to this matter.

Why, it might be asked, was it now necessary to make any further readjustment than that in the 1936 Act of the burden which fell on private and public funds respectively? Could not they leave things as they were, and not run the risk of arousing controversy? The answer was to be found in the magnitude of the reforms proposed in this Bill, and in the standards which were demanded in the interests of all children alike, whether in council or existing Church schools.

A Dual Choice

The object of the Government was to bring the Church school along with them in as close a degree of partnership as possible. There was a dual choice for managers and

governors either to become a controlled school or an aided school. The development in policy was when the State accepted full financial responsibility not only for the running costs—but for the necessary capital outlay—called "repairs, alterations, and improvements." In return the school became, as its name suggested, "controlled." In the Government's view, the nation could, without prejudice to long-cherished principle, accept the full financial responsibility, because the offer was accompanied by public control of the management and the appointment of teachers. Under this system there was no doubt that the difficulties of the dual system were materially eased.

The other alternative was the aided school for those wishing to appoint as teachers only members of their own faith, and to be unfettered in respect of denominational religious instruction. Here, since there was no substantial increase in control, the tendencies of national policy continued, and the nation could only accept a partial financial responsibility. But the Government did offer half the cost of bringing the school up to standard.

The proposals he had outlined had received a wide measure of support in the course of full and frank discussions with bodies and persons holding widely different views, and these proposals ought not to be lightly dismissed.

The 1936 Agreements

Besides this second offer of the aided or controlled status there was also available the resuscitation of agreements under the 1936 Act and the corresponding Liverpool Act enabling managers to receive grants from the authorities up to 75 per cent. of the cost of the work involved, or equivalent assistance, and thereafter the 50 per cent. Exchequer grant. Further, clause 15 and clause 96 made it possible in cases where the movement of a denominational school was necessitated by town and country planning or because the existing premises could not be brought up to standards, to make an equitable contribution to the cost of the new replacing school. This should help managers in the period after the war when the building activities of the Churches would be largely directed to the devastated and replanned areas. Where a denomination wished to build a completely new school it would be able to do so subject to the procedure laid down in clause 12. Such a school would thereafter be maintained by the authority. Under clause

14 (2) managers could take their choice of these alternatives, and they would be given ample time and ample particulars of the cost involved in bringing their schools up to the requisite standard. He hoped the House would examine carefully these provisions to see that they were perfectly fair.

The new terms were generous, and he wished them to be fully examined and discussed. He would ask those who felt deeply to dismiss from their minds the wholly unwarrantable view that the Government desired either to tear away Church schools from unwilling managers or to force them inhumanely out of business. The best way he could reassure them would be to quote the verse of the old hymn:—

“Ye fearful saints fresh courage take
The clouds ye so much dread
Are big with mercy, and shall break
In blessings on your head.”

The contents of clause 24, providing that in all county and auxiliary schools the school day should begin with a collective act of worship, and that religious instruction should be given in every such school, had been widely welcomed as representing the spirit in which the Bill had been drawn. This provision was accompanied by the usual conscience clause, for rights of conscience must remain inviolate. Was it too much to hope that their discussions would help remove the historic grievances dating from the Act of 1902? In so vital, personal, and individual a subject as the teaching of religion, the State could not claim to possess absolute authority, or to speak the final and decisive word. The Churches should never forget their own responsibility for utilising the out-of-school period. The responsibilities and the burdens must be shared.

Order and Liberty

Mr. Butler, in conclusion, said that “there were few who had not commented favourably on the wide sub-range of the Bill, and there were few, including those likely to make the most sacrifices, who wished to lose the advance it suggested. Perhaps the Bill owed its welcome to an appreciation of the synthesis which it tried to create between order and liberty, between local initiative and national direction, between the voluntary agency and the State, between the pri-

vate life of a school and the public life of its district, between manual and intellectual skill, and between the better and the less well endowed. Hammered on the anvil of this war the nation had been shaped to a new unity of pride and purpose. That unity would, by this Bill, in future be founded in greater measure, where it should be founded—in the education and training of our youth.

“But more than that. As the reforms were made effective we should develop as never before our most abiding assets, our richest resources—the character and competence of a great people.”

A meeting organised by the British Council of Churches, to be presided over by the Moderator of the Free Church Federal Council, and addressed by the Archbishop of Canterbury, is to be held in London today (January 27th). It is understood that the meeting will be in general support of Mr. Butler's proposals.

BRITISH METHODISTS WELCOME AMERICAN METHODIST CRUSADE

In connection with the American Methodist Crusade for International Order (see *Spiritual Issues*, No. 204), the Methodist Press Bureau reports:

The General Purposes Committee of the Methodist Church in Great Britain, the Methodist Ecumenical Committee and the Methodist Temperance and Social Welfare Department, acting in concert, have asked the President of the British Methodist Conference to send a message of goodwill to the Council of American Bishops on the eve of their momentous undertaking, and the following cable has been despatched to Bishop Oxnham, their Chairman:—

“British Methodists greatly rejoice in the crusade for a new World Order which you and your brethren are inaugurating in the Methodist Church of America, and earnestly pray for God's blessing thereon. They commend the ‘Six Pillars of Peace, adopted by the (American) Federal Council as a weighty expression of Christian opinion, and trust that on such a basis the Churches in both lands, and especially the Methodist Fellowship on both sides of the Atlantic, may co-operate to promote such action as may be necessary to end war, to establish world law and order, economic and racial justice, and to guarantee individual freedom.”